

WILDFLOWERING IN SEPTEMBER.

1.

I would be dismal with all the fine pearls of the crown
of a king;
But I can talk plainly to you, you little blue flower
of the Spring!

.....

Soon would I tire of all riches and honours or power that
they fling;
But you are my own, of my own folk, you little blue flower
of the Spring.

As Shaw Neilson does not dedicate his lines to any specific blue flower we can take our pick. For us here in Caloundra there is Dampiera or Dianella - the Flax-lily, or Scented Fan - all of them favourites!

It was a lovely opening for official spring with clear skies and warm days after rain; not forgetting the promise of more rain from Inigo. (Our Queensland weather-man Inigo Jones has become so much a part of our lives that out of our affection for him and with no lack of respect for the Almighty we say he gives us our rain.)

Though there has not yet been time for the rain to bring forth more blossom it seems to have lifted a veil of sadness off my eyes enabling me to see afresh the gift we already have. The Boronia alone, is worth a visit, yet accompanying it are all the bright things recorded for last month as well as still more Bush Pea.

In the heathland to the north of Currimundi the Banksia Men look hideously ugly beside the clean newly-opened blooms on the same trees. Wedding Bush reflects the sunlight to illumine the smaller white flowers of the Zieria. Devil's Rice is everywhere. Irises were out in multitudes today and where they grow on burnt land they fling their flowers out in purple domes, so that the picture of them called to mind those graveyards in Kashmir where

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the larger irises bloom among the black slate headstones.

Yellow Hibiscus which flowered on despite the drought in their gullies are blooming better and bigger for the additional moisture of the recent rains. Pink Convolvulus, that very small bindweed is out near our yellow hibiscus and Bernard O'Dowd adds to its charm so -

Up the valley head
From creeks alive with song
The white fire and the red
Of heather run along,
The pink convolvulus
Demurely watches us.

To find Sarsaparilla and Kennedya is not surprising; neither are greatly affected by drought. Dianellas too, are standing straight as their goddess namesake while Twining Guinea-flowers and masses of Aotus rival the sun. Stackhousia, Pigface, and Scented Fans are all close together in the dunes. More White Doubletails are out, a few Sun Orchids (another blue flower of the Spring!) and over the flats lots of the several species of Whitebeards. It is a joy to be out among all these.

7th September.

It is impossible to think there might be desirable flowers up Bell Creek without following up the thought by going to see. There always is something to be found on an eight-mile walk. Today, it was an ice-blue Sun Orchid. To find an orchid is exciting: there's something in the nature of ground orchids that takes hold of the enthusiast and haunts him forever more. The more one delves into books on orchids the tighter is one ensnared by their fascination. To discover them in the field quickens the pulse. Our ground orchids, or many of them have the added exclusiveness of not being able to be grown in captivity - which leaves them the sole joy of those who can and will take long walks. Of all

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the ground orchids the Sun Orchids must surely be the most exclusive for they will open only for bright warm sunlight.

Other flowers on this Bell Creek walk not previously recorded were a broad-leaf *Makea*, strongly and pleasantly scented and a humble bright-blue Lobelia.

8th September.

Stirred into action by the enthusiasm born of painting the ice-blue sun orchid, I set out after the job was done to check on a colony of Striped Hoods that grew around the base of some banksias on Tooway Flat. I ~~was~~ there were some buds but I had not expected to find a flower out yet. The difficulty is to find them at all, for like its related species, the large tongue orchid its colouring is hard to pick up in the grass. Several times, in looking for them I have put my hand right on one as I parted the grass and broken it off, without seeing it at all. This species holds up the labellum (hence the name *Cryptostylis erecta*) so one can look straight into the lighted interior. But what eats ground orchids? Several in this colony have been nipped off - wallabies and bandicoots both hunt there.

12th September.

Today, with a companion as enthusiastic as myself distance knew no limits. First we went down Bell Creek (by car to save time) so I could exhibit those ice-blue sun orchids which should still have been flowering after five days. No evidence remained to prove the honesty of my story except very visible signs of the recent presence of wallabies. So! circumstantial evidence allowable - wallabies like our rare ground orchids! Why? Is it because they are a rare treat, or are they rare simply because wallabies like them and seek them out? Perhaps if I had anything of the quality of Edith Coleman, the mystery might be solved, but such remarkable naturalists are rarer still than the orchids. These flowers had been one of the lures I had used to

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bring my companion to Caloundra and not wishing her to be disappointed we then sought out a colony of the same species I had noted under a paperbark on the far side of Currimundi. Fortune was against us there too for these had been attacked by creatures much smaller, which had opened the stalks and sucked out the sap, leaving the flowers and leaves to die in a collapsed position. Search failed to find any more. But there were plenty of other good things to see.

The Tea-tree these days is wonderful! There is pure white and white tinged with pink; there is light pink and deep pink and variations again of all of these. Many different species and varieties of them may now be purchased from nurseries which is a happy thought. Not unlike tea-tree, the Baeckea flowers in millions of tiny blooms along long trails of ferny foliage. Each single flower contains the mystery and miracle of life; each single flower gives to us the simple truth that is love.

It is emotionally disturbing to see these wildflower areas one by one disappearing under settlement and no steps taken to reserve even one quarter acre for the preservation of any of these beautiful species. In other parts of the world, having realised this mistake too late attempts are being made to re-create such areas as these. In other states they are reserving even small areas simply to save one species alone, and there it means rabbit-proof fencing and even weeding. We have saved much forest, let us save some wildflowers. (In November 1954 approximately three and a half acres of this Tooway Flat was permanently reserved by the Landsborough Shire Council for wildflowers.)

Another white flower that grows in masses on bushes and which scents the clean air of Currimundi is the Woombye. It seems to like only the banks of the lake where another of the charming Whitebeards is also out. There are Mat Rushes in flower too and though these flowers are rather insignificant when not under a

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magnifying glass they have a deliciously strong scent. By far the most noticeable flowers of the day are Boronia on the sandy flats and Actus in the pademelon swamps.

15th September.

Exploring a less accessible corner of the allium today I found some blooms of Comesperma ericinum, a two petalled flower called Heath Milkwort. There is precious little of it here but it grows in abundance on Mount Mee. Then there is Daviesia umbellulata, the Bitter Pea with prickles, in full bloom. Our Queensland wax-flowers have never been better, nor has Devil's Rice and the Small-leaf Guinea-flower. More Dampiera is out and Mirbelia which though small makes atonement by being out in profusion. Dogwood is appearing too. More rain has freshened all the plant life and it will certainly bring on something new. Nevertheless it is not a good spring for recording wildflowers.

17th September.

After being so excited by finding the Green Bottlebrush in the Lake Cootharaba district I now shamefully admit it grows right here in Caloundra. This very day there is a bush bearing two lovely blossoms right beside the Currimundi Road.

20th September on TAMBOURINE MOUNTAIN.

This mountain has had very little spring rain as yet but despite this the weekend here has been flower-full.

On Friday afternoon, out on the Knoll, we saw the first pretty white Box-tree Orchids that are to be found in many places on the mountain. Mostly, they are on box trees but we also saw them on a Lilly-pilly. It was there, on the Knoll we found Stewart's Foxes and with much excitement - the Potato Orchid. Come in John

Blight.

...Would you believe the forests are so rich

With such eccentric flora? I have found

Potato-orchids, spud-like buds.....

And earth stars, snakes' bread sprouting like red ears,

And bells; and ferns; root buttresses, and tiers

Of white beech-orchids in the flowerless trees...

Previously I had only read of the potato orchid, so the joy of finding it was great. It is a sprophyte (vegetable organism living on decayed organic matter). Such plants are rare, and characteristically leafless and without green colouring. For life it depends on a fungus which supplies it with the necessities for its simple living. Its charm for me lies in the unusual shape and colouring. A third ground orchid found there was the bright pink *Caladenia* - the Pinky.

Everlastings were everywhere, but then they always are on Tamborine. In addition still, there was a tall pale-pink Indigo flower. The blue dye is made from an Indian species of this plant. Another and brighter pink was in the Darling Pea. From an old anonymous bush ballad comes this notorious flower in verse.

I take the Old Man Plain, criss-cross it all again

Until my eyes the track no longer see;

My beer and brandy brain seeks balmy sleep in vain,

I feel as if I had the Darling Pea.

Which lines seem also to be about the best description one could give for the effects of this poisonous plant on stock.

Yesterday, Saturday, we walked down Long Road to the very tree over which climbs the Wonga Vine Judith Wright has known and loved and written about.

7.

Look down; be still.

The sunburst day's on fire

O twilight bell,

flower of the wonga vine.

I gather you

out of his withering light.

Sleep there, red;

sleep there, yellow and white.

Move as the creek

moves to its hidden pool.

The sun has eyes of fire;

by my white waterfall.

Lie on my eyes like hands,

let no sun shine--

O twilight bell,

flower of the wonga vine.

As it hangs, the red dashes of its yellow face are only seen on close inspection; what one does see when standing back to view the vine as a whole is the white outside of the massed flowers tumbling down the tree just like the spray from a waterfall. There is another Wonga Vine worth a special visit at flowering time. It is up and down a majestic Deciduous Fig-tree on the bank of the Upper North Pine in the Dayboro District. Both of these lovely vines belong to the public which, I pray will love them always and replace them if they should die.

The Guinea-flower all over the mountain is the toothed-leaf species, not unlike the twining guinea-flower but smaller and paler. All along the top of the escarpment on the eastern side

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Mavea is in full flower, not only the usual purple but a white one as well and these are fraternising with a bright violet-coloured Mint Bush and a pink zieria, the Sandfly Zieria. The large Goodenia I had noticed there in January was again, or perhaps still in flower - and Wild Raspberries too. On this side of the mountain there were lots of Box-tree Orchids.

And bole and branch are everywhere
Loaded with elkhorns, and those rare
Ethereal darlings among blooms,
The orchids - pendants, stars and plumes
Hung on the lofty winding walls
Of those green-lumined forest halls.

That quotation is from James Devaney's EAGLE Haunts near which we were exploring.

There too, was a little Clematis- the Englishman's Traveller's Joy. Oh, so very little, it hardly looked like Clematis at all but I have drawn it just in case no other is found this year. This is how clematis should be, as described by Furnley Maurice.

Here, from on high the white clematis trails
Down to a leaf in a rotting log entombed
Roses there were for Persian nightingales
But these are the first flowers that ever bloomed.

Another name for Clematis is Headache Vine because if the leaves are rubbed up in the hands and smelt, it will be found they have quite a pungent odour which is alleged to clear the head and alleviate headaches. I have not yet tried it myself.

Today, Sunday, we went to the south-western side of the mount and there found the small Ragwort, Herbert's Passion-flower, and the Kangaroo Apple.

Such were the flowers of this spring weekend on Tamborine. Two more must be mentioned as belonging to the way. They are

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the Weeping Bottlebrush which we saw along the banks of the Albert River and many of the creeks.

My way, along the shine-track bitumen,

A hundred yards or so one side

A hanging splash of bottle-brush, long red

Gouts of blood, behind, tea-tree and runty gums....

Brian vrepont, the poet, saw it in much the same way as we did. Though it is a much cultivated tree, it never looks more at home than when it hangs its brilliant blooms over the still waters of some country stream. The other wayside flower was the Dogwood growing always on poor soil, usually where its golden yellow flower, grey needle-foliage and black trunk stand out most vividly.

24th September back at Caloundra.

Gentle rains have fallen since Sunday, so today, having finished drawing all the Tamborine flowers I set out to see what changes had taken place in the past week at Tooway Creek. No more flowers of the Striped Hood have yet come out so the one I found early this month was well ahead of the others. The Tea-tree is nearly done but the Boronia is still shockingly beautiful. The same deep-pink of the boronia is in the Bauera and many people must include it in their bunches of boronia without noticing its more open-flowers and whorls of dainty fern-like leaves. Re-opening is the yellow Sons-of-the-Sun after several months rest and the Coral Heath too, after its yearly spell. Gloanthus is still out and the Geebung too, and the very lovely Yellow Melaleuca that grows into a small tree.

There are still Vanilla Lilies and Irises and Yellow Fans with their alternate name of Spike Goodenia. Pimelea and Devil's Rice are there too - altogether that happy combination in many places of mauve, yellow and white.

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30th September.

Out of the brackish sand
see the phaius orchid build
her intricate moonlight tower
that rusts away in flower.

and to see it is to share with Judith Wright a moving experience.

For whose eyes -- for whose eyes
does this blind being weave
sand's poverty, water's sour,
the white and black of the hour

into the image I hold
and cannot understand?
Is it for the ants, the bees,
the lizard outside his cave,

or is it to garland time --
eternity's cold tool
that severs with its blade
the gift as soon as made?

Then I too am your fool.
What can I do but believe?
Here like the plant I weave
your dying garlands, time.

For whose eyes? For those eyes that can enjoy a beautiful thing
for itself, and forever reflect the joy of that moment. The lizard
of the swamp, the bees of the swamp and the ants know better how
to love the Phaius Orchid than those people who pick bunches of
them to place in containers within the walls of their homes. a

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II.

noble flower that slowly dies away on its tower retains for eternity its divine spark, for the seed forms and ripens and is scattered by its individual agent to return again as a plant that will flower and seed and live again the divine cycle. And here is my heart-felt plea to those people who might be tempted to join in the picking of phaius orchids - please enjoy them, making it your eyes they were meant for, but leave them to live out their natural lives.

Noosa is one of the few places where phaius grow and it was there today I saw it. The flowering is half over and most of them plucked and gone. The ranger in the National Park told me that people have even dug them up out of the Park and taken away the whole plant. The pioneers did that sort of thing but we should know better. It was a rust-coloured one I saw today but I was only able to get one flower off the stalk to paint and so I plan to go to Point Lookout, Stradbroke Island next spring where I hope to paint the whole plant, leaves, flowers and all. The Stradbroke Islanders are very proud of their wildflowers and value them highly. Justice must be done to this, the noblest of our ground orchids. The colours of them range from cream through rust to crimson.

The leaf of the phaius is like the leaf of the Shepherd's Crook and the Calanthe - though larger. Noosa National Park is fortunate in also having numbers of the Calanthe Orchid in the Tanglewood which must make a grand sight around Christmas to March. Shepherd's Crooks also grew there. The phaius is known also as the Swamp Orchid.

In Noosa Wood the Blubberies are flowering. This is one of the Quondongs and its strings of tiny fringed bells (white) are quite delightful. Later it will be hung with bunches of small bright-blue berries.

Nunyi-um is out at Noosa too. From the road as we travelled I noticed Silky Oaks were coming out. This is our best known

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12.

Grevillea species. In Kenya where it is much planted they use its botanical name for everyday - it sounds good that way. There is Rice-flower, or Wild Rice which must not be confused with Pimelea called riceflower in Victoria but is one of our everlastings. It stays in bud for a long time, large clusters of buds like handful of rice, but soon after the buds open the flower is blown away by the wind. Sometimes it is pink-tinged but this I have not found yet.

And last in the September list is the Buttercup gleaming in a shining yellow colony from the roadside.

Other September epiphytes include the much-loved King Orchid, The Spider Orchid, and Yellow Bells (*Dendrobium gracilicaule*). I have included them because they belong to the forests I have been visiting, but when one comes to examine the situation there is so little rain forest left and this kind of wildflowering is usually done in the bush-house. Even more rare is the saprophyte Galeola once found in these forests too - though it will grow elsewhere. The Galeola CANNOT be cultivated so one is lucky to find it at all now. I found the one I have drawn, having survived a bushfire, re-newing its climb up a charred stump on the Boreen Point Road.